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Meeting Notes

Attendees: Resource Agencies
Jeff Brillhart - NHDOT
John Butler - NHDOT
Charlie Hood-NHDOT
Bill O'Donnell - FHWA
Harry Kinter - FHWA
Anthony Grande - VHB
Senan Murdock - VHB

Date/Time: 02-16-00/10:45 am

Project No.: 50885

Place: Design Conference Room

Re: I-93 Salem - Manchester

Notes taken by: SPM

The purpose of the meeting was to review the project status with the Resource Agencies and receive some preliminary thoughts regarding the design between Exits 1 & 2. More specifically, the Department wanted to confirm that the widening be to the outside in the vicinity of Porcupine Brook, a prime wetland.

Jeff Brillhart presented an overview of the project history. He mentioned that the Scoping Report was nearing completion and that the design was progressing from the MA/NH border ahead to the north. Jeff mentioned that various design alternatives were being looked at, as well as the possibility of incorporating a light rail, HOV lanes, and expanding bus service. He said the Department is in the process of establishing a task force which would meet in March and that meetings with the towns had been scheduled for March.

Tony Grande explained the plans: the color base plan with wetlands covering the entire length of the corridor, and the working design plans showing the intended improvements through Exit 2. Tony explained the design, impacts, controls, and the three interchange options at Exit 2.

The following issues were discussed:

- Bill Neidermeyer (USFW) said that based on what he had read in the newspaper articles, he understood that the design was going to consist of 4 lanes in each direction instead of 3 lanes. It was also questioned whether the previous quantities of wetland impacts assumed 3 lanes. Jeff explained that based strictly on the traffic numbers, 5 lanes are needed south of Exit 1 and 4 lanes are needed through Exit 3. He also mentioned that in the early 1990's, the Department had estimated that the project would impact about 30 acres. Whether it was the 3 lane alternative or the 4

lane alternative is not known. Jeff mentioned that he didn't think the proposed advanced mitigation sites in Salem and Londonderry would necessarily compensate for all the impacts associated with the project. Jeff mentioned that the creation/enhancement portion of the proposed Pelham Road mitigation site is roughly 4 acres, with another 20 acres of preservation.

- Bill O'Donnell asked the Resource Agencies if they thought it would be better to relocate Policy Brook rather than having it so close to the highway. There wasn't any feedback from the Agencies on this.
- Mark Kern (EPA) asked how HOV lane and rail fit in with this design. Jeff explained that this design is the highway option only and that the Department would present rail and HOV lane options in the near future. Jeff also mentioned that the Department is pursuing the reactivation of rail service along the west rail corridor (Lowell to Nashua) independent of the I-93 project. In addition, the Department has asked that the consultant also look at a rail corridor in the I-93 median. It is likely that the ROW would be purchased under the I-93 project and that the land could be used as a recreational trail in the mean time until funds were available to construct the rail line. Mark Kern expressed concern that the location of the train might drive the direction that the highway is widened and not wetland impacts. Relations to Porcupine Brook and widening the highway to the outside to avoid the brook (but still impact prime wetlands to the outside), Mark did not feel that difference was of much consequence. Lori Sommer (NHDES Wetland Bureau) felt that minimizing impacts to the brook would be preferred. Mark Kern also didn't think it was necessary to widen to the inside to save an acre of wetland if that was a more logical footprint for the location of the rail corridor.
- Mark Kern asked Jeff if there would be provisions for wildlife movement within this project. Jeff mentioned that the Department would consider this. In the Salem area there may be the need for a couple of causeways to address the flood issue
- Harry Kinter stated that the potential for 4 (f) impacts would need to be considered in discussion of rail location

Jeff then explained that the design would move forward and that he would set up meetings with Resource Agencies to go over the designs as each of the four sections progressed. Section one as shown, through Exit 2; Section two, through Exit 3; Section three through Exit 4; and Section four, through the I-93/I-293 split.